

On September 11, 2001, our hearts were broken, but our spirits grew stronger. On September 11, 2007, I can think of no better memorial to those we lost on 9/11 than making their children and grandchildren's world a better place.

Some will say time has passed and it's time to move on with their lives. I have worked with many of those 9/11 families, and they have moved on with their lives. But again, through every great tragedy one never knows when you'll break down and cry because you remember something.

Every American remembers September 11, the year 2001. Every American knows where they were that day. Every American came together to make sure that those that needed help would have it.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the American people for standing together. I thank those that lost their lives to save other lives and, hopefully, we will never forget those that made the great sacrifices who still need our help. September 11 will be in everybody's minds forever in history. Let us not, here in this Congress, forget those that have survived but still need our help to get them through the illnesses they are facing.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT RICCIARDI

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. FOSSELLA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute and honor to Robert Ricciardi, a New York City firefighter who's retiring today after many years of service to the city of New York and to the people of New York.

Robert is an exemplary model of what makes the Fire Department of New York the best Fire Department in the world. Like many other firefighters, Robert spent a great deal of his free time volunteering throughout his community on Staten Island. He was an active member of his church and spent much time coaching youth sports. As a matter of fact, I bet tonight Robert will be at the St. Claire's gym for youth basketball tryouts.

Robert has served New York City with distinction as one of New York's bravest. Over the course of his career he's helped save the lives of countless people, risking his own safety to protect others. Like his fellow firefighters and so many throughout the country, Robert rushed into burning buildings as others ran in the opposite direction with a singular mission, to save the lives of the people whose names he did

not know, that he never met and might never see again. Robert understood that one of the most important contributions we can make is to help others in need. He's dedicated his life to this principle, and he leaves behind a great legacy of service.

Robert, like so many firefighters across Staten Island and the city also knew many who lost their lives on September 11, as the previous speaker just mentioned, and with that, he carries that with him throughout his life.

We also know that Staten Island and all of New York are better off because of Robert's dedication and decision to be one of New York City's bravest. His service will be clearly missed, but we are fortunate that Robert will continue to be a positive force in our local community. We wish Robert and his wife, Dorine, along with their four children, Robert, Christian, Nicole and Gregory, the best of luck in their future, wherever it may take them.

I'm honored to call Robert a friend, and I'm delighted to have this opportunity to say thank you for all that you've done for New York City.

Good luck, Robert. We wish you well.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE NEW DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, today marks the eighth month since my colleagues and I were given the privilege to enter this sacred institution to represent our respective districts across the country. The Democratic freshman class, one of the largest in recent history, also came at an historic time in changing control of both houses of Congress and leading America in a new direction.

Much has changed in eight months. Much has changed personally for each and every one of us. Eight months ago I stood in this very spot with my 2-month-old son, Gus, as we were sworn into this esteemed body. My 5-year-old was a kindergartner at the time.

Well, now, 8 months later, Gus is 10 months old, on the verge of walking; and that kindergartner is now an experienced first grader.

Much has changed for us professionally. I had the opportunity last week to go back and address the school where I taught. Many of us came to this institution from many different walks of life. We were teachers. We were newspapermen. We were law en-

forcement officers. We were physicians. We were farmers. We were many different things. But each and every one of us came to this institution with a very sacred duty: to change the direction that America was going; to listen to the American public; and to make sure that this institution was once again judged on effectiveness, not ideology. And this Congress has done just that.

This Congress has changed the priorities that have permeated Washington for the past 12 years. This new Congress has changed things from some of the most historic funding for veterans to the most sweeping ethics reform, described as some of the biggest changes since the Watergate era.

We have much to be proud of and much work yet to do. The Democratic freshman class was given an opportunity to change the course and to change the debate.

I had the opportunity to speak with some reporters asking what will the legacy be? What will this class have accomplished when all is said and done? And I think, in looking at this group of people and having the sense of pride that I have in serving with them, that the answer will not be known for many years. This class has thrown themselves into their work with such due diligence that I think the American people would be proud. We passed legislation not just on a Democratic agenda but on a bipartisan agenda.

We knew, each and every one of us that got here, that we did not come to this institution with an ideological mandate. We knew that the American people, when they were speaking last November, were not saying that they were enamored with just Democratic ideology. They were enamored with the speaking about changing the direction of the country, providing a new direction, providing ethics that actually work. Providing funding for our veterans, funding for our children, and taking this country in a new direction in the war on terror and what was happening in Iraq.

And I am proud to stand here today with my colleagues, and we are going to spend a little bit of time highlighting those achievements, and it is one that all American people should be proud of.

This Congress can do nothing with just one party. This Congress can do nothing with just ideology. When this Congress works together, things get done that would amaze the American people.

I, coming from Minnesota, have witnessed two of the biggest disasters that my State has ever witnessed. Back on August 1, the collapse of the I-35W bridge, to see a major interstate, eight-lane highway, crash into the Mississippi River. We lost seven people with a hundred injured. That tragedy and the response to it illustrates what can be the best in America.

Within 60 hours, the House of Representatives and the Senate had passed